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Sic Et Non Analysis

Peter Abelard (1079-1142) was a 12th century medieval Philosopher and intellectual. He was known for his knowledge in the field of logic. He was charged with heresy several times. He wrote a work named *Sic Et Non*, which contained 158 philosophical and theological questions that had divided opinions. In this work, he practiced a dialectal method of reflection, and left the questions open ended for discussion. In this piece, Abelard pointed out the writings of the Church Fathers and how they differed and contradicted each other.

Abelard argued that the manner of speech was what led to understanding and several topics were hidden in dialect of speech chosen to express them. In fact, he seemed to argue that proper speech was not always helpful when trying to understand an issue. He believed one had to find an understanding to not just the words themselves. “It is a noteworthy quality to love the truth in words, not the words themselves” (Abelard, 2). Meaning one could not always believe what people said because it may not be the truth.

Yet Abelard claimed it may not be the truth but, people should not be judged by their own and another person’s intelligence. A person may not know the truth and whether they were not telling a lie or they were rather telling their version of the truth. He defined lying as false meaning in what was said with intent of deceiving others. Lying required the intent of deceiving others as opposed to errors. The church fathers did not lie but rather they were misleading and contradictory in their claims.

Some of their claims were contradictory because of not only errors but because of poor translations, unclear authorship, and ignorance. It was common for others to put their own input and thoughts into writings. When others inserted their own opinions, this led to the abandonment of the truth and according to Abelard “the worst opinions” (Abelard, 3). Several saints used other’s ideas to come up with their own ideas and interpretations. Even Saint Augustine admitted he dictated “my own ideas as well as others” (Abelard, 3). Further he claims opinion was often presented as being the truth, we must look towards God for an answer because he explained.

In order for a better understanding of knowledge Abelard argued, we must use common words in speeches, because when truth was used in discussions it was different than when it was being adopted or learned by everyone else. Meaning that in discussions if we use words that were too proper and hard for people to understand they can misinterpret the main purpose or idea. He argued that it was important to determine what things come from the spirit of God and what things come from the spirit of an individual. To understand the holy scriptures, we must love and appreciate God and try to understand our neighbors. Meaning that to understand differentiating opinions we must try to understand the individual and our own ideas to try and determine the truth.

In conclusion, Abelard argued that if speech was not so proper it can lead to a clearer understanding. The writing of the Church Fathers was contradictory because of the insertions of others ideas, poor translation and the misinterpreting. God was the final voice above all that can help determine and understand ideas and questions in life. Peoples opinions were not the truth but rather they were what was presented as being the truth. The use of common words adapted the truth so everyone could have a better understanding. It was not the opinions and ideas of others that led us to the truth but the Spirit of God.

**Citations:**

* "Medieval Sourcebook: Peter Abelard (1079-1142): Prologue to Sic Et Non." Internet History Sourcebooks Project. Trans. Wendy Lewis. Fordham University, n.d. Web. 27 Nov. 2016.